

What is Claimed is:

1. A document processing center comprising:
 - a first document processing system comprising:
 - a plurality of document processing stations for performing operations on documents and processing information relating to documents;
 - a plurality of receptacles for storing documents between operations;
 - a communication interface for receiving information produced by the processing stations and producing messages relating to the information; and
 - a plurality of electronic labels receiving the messages wirelessly from the communication interface, each of the labels being affixed to one of the receptacles, each of the labels being operative to display messages addressed to the label.
2. The document processing center of claim 1 wherein each of the labels is associated with the documents placed in the receptacle to which the label is affixed.
3. The document processing center of claim 2 wherein one or more of the document processing stations includes a plurality of sorting locations, wherein groupings of documents are created based on the sorting location into which they are sorted and wherein each grouping of documents is designated according to its sorting location.
4. The document processing center of claim 3 wherein the sorting locations are pockets used by one or more of the document processing stations for receiving sorted documents.
5. The document processing center of claim 4 and also including a subserver connected to the document processing stations, the subserver being operative to coordinate operations of the processing stations and to receive information from the processing stations, the subserver being operative to prepare messages based on the information from the processing stations, the subserver being further operative to associate each message with a pocket.

6. The document processing center of claim 5 wherein each of the labels is associated with one of the pockets and wherein documents from each pocket are placed in a receptacle bearing a label corresponding to the pocket.

7. The document processing center of claim 6 and also including a communication server serving as an interface between the subserver and the communication interface, the communication server being operative to receive messages from the subserver and associate the message with the label associated with the pocket.

8. The document processing center of claim 7 wherein each of the electronic labels has a unique address.

9. The document processing center of claim 8 and also including a plurality of additional document processing systems, each of the additional processing systems operating in parallel with the first document processing system, each of the additional processing systems comprising a plurality of document processing stations and a plurality of receptacles having affixed electronic labels, each of the document processing systems employing a subserver connected to the document processing stations, the subservers being connected to the central communication server, the central communication server being operative to control transmission of messages from the first document processing system and each of the additional document processing systems to the electronic labels employed by the first document processing system and each of the additional document processing systems, respectively.

10. The document processing center of claim 9, wherein each of the electronic labels is a low cost wireless receiver operative to receive radio frequency signals representing a message and to display the message using a visual display.

11. The document processing center of claim 10 wherein each of the electronic labels is operative to receive an operator input, wherein the communication interface is operative to send status requests to the electronic labels and wherein the electronic labels are operative to use modulated backscatter to send a signal to the communication interface indicating the presence of the operator input.

12. A method of document processing, comprising the steps of:
 associating each of a plurality of receptacles, each receptacle having an affixed electronic label, with a sorting location into which documents are to be sorted during a document processing operation;
 subjecting documents to a first interim processing operation and sorting the documents into each of the sorting locations;
 associating the documents at each sorting location with the receptacle associated with the sorting location and placing the documents within the receptacle; and
 wirelessly sending a display message to each electronic label providing identifying information describing the documents within the receptacle.

13. The method of claim 12 and also including the steps of:
 placing the receptacle in a holding area while processing information relating to the documents in the receptacle; and
 using the information displayed at the electronic label affixed to each receptacle to locate a receptacle in which particular documents are located when the documents are needed in processing information relating to the documents.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the information displayed relates to processing priority of the documents within the receptacle.

15. The method of claim 14 and also including a step of sending a new display message providing instructions to move the receptacle to a new processing stage.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the message includes an instruction to flash the display in order to attract operator attention.

17. The method of claim 16 and also including the steps of:
sorting the documents within the receptacles into new sorting locations;
associating a receptacle with each of the new sorting locations;
placing documents from each of the sorting locations into the receptacle associated with the sorting location; and
wirelessly sending a display message to an electronic label associated with each of the receptacles providing information relating to the documents within the receptacle.

18. The method of claim 17 and also including the steps of:
(a) determining if processing of the documents is complete;
(b) if processing of the documents is not complete, performing additional processing steps, sending wireless messages to the electronic labels appropriate to the processing stage of the documents, and returning to step (a); and
(c) if processing of the documents is complete, sending wireless messages to the labels indicating the final destination and disposition of the documents and moving the receptacles to the final destination.